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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9363
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RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0107
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/PD, NEA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [MOPS](#) [KPAO](#) [RP](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: FUNERALS FOR FIL-AM SOLDIERS UNDERSCORE CLOSE
U.S.-PHILIPPINE BONDS

¶1. (U) This message is Sensitive but Unclassified -- Please handle accordingly.

¶2. (SBU) Summary: Military funerals for two Filipino-American soldiers killed in Iraq were recently held in the Philippines. The funerals drew large crowds and generated highly positive local press play. In spite of the tragic circumstances, the funerals highlighted continued close U.S.-Philippine bonds. End Summary.

Funerals for Two Soldiers

¶3. (U) Military funerals for two Filipino-American soldiers killed in Iraq were recently held in the Philippines. Details on the two funerals follow:

-- Charge and U.S. Army Brigadier General Richard Mills attended the February 7 funeral of U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer Ruel Garcia, 24, in the town of Valenzuela, located approximately 20 kilometers north of downtown Manila. A Funeral Honor Guard from U.S. Army Korea was present on the occasion. CWO Garcia emigrated to the U.S. at the age of 16, later joining the U.S. Army. He was killed on January 16 when the Apache helicopter he was flying was shot down in Taji, central Iraq. CWO Garcia posthumously received the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and the Air Medal;

-- Charge and U.S. Army Brigadier General G.A. Schumacher of Ft. Belvoir, Va. attended the January 19 funeral of U.S. Army Sergeant Myla Maravillosa, 24, who was killed while on duty with a U.S. Army Reserve unit in Hawijah, central Iraq, on Christmas Eve. A Funeral Honor Guard, also from the 8th Army Korea, was present at the funeral, which took place in Inabangay, Bohol Island in the southern Philippines. Sgt. Maravillosa moved to Hawaii as a teenager, enlisting in the U.S. Army Reserves in 1999. She posthumously received the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal and the Good Conduct Medal.

Funerals Draw Large Crowds

¶4. (U) Both of the funerals drew large crowds. Hundreds of townspeople lined the streets of Valenzuela as the funeral cortege passed by. In a particularly emotional moment, Philippine military helicopters dropped rose petals over the

crowd at the cemetery, symbolizing CWO Garcia's role as a helicopter pilot. Many people also turned out for the funeral in Bohol. In Valenzuela, the mayor of neighboring Obando, CWO Garcia's hometown in Bulacan Province, handed CWO Garcia's relatives a framed copy of a municipal resolution recognizing Garcia's heroism and achievement.

Positive Press Play

¶5. (U) The funerals generated highly positive local press play. Most of Manila's daily newspapers carried photos of the funerals, including photos of U.S. military officers kneeling down and presenting folded U.S. flags to next of kin. Broadcast news also showed video clips of the funerals.

Comment

¶6. (SBU) The high honors awarded posthumously to CWO Garcia and Sgt. Maravillosa exemplified U.S. dedication to its armed forces. Some observers have contrasted U.S. dedication to its forces with the numerous cases of Filipino troops who are killed in combat but rarely receive such high honors, despite the many casualties sustained in the decades-long Communist and Muslim separatist insurgencies. By showcasing the contributions and valor of the many Filipino-Americans in the Iraq conflict, the funerals highlighted close U.S.-Philippine bonds cemented over the past 100 years in war and peace.

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